

State business climate survey called 'useless'

A top official of the nation's leading selection consulting firm for business called a study that placed Michigan at the bottom of the list in its business climate "simple-minded and useless."

William Shapiro, vice president of the Chicago-based Fantus Co., criticized a report produced by Alexander Grant & Co. for the Conference of State Manufacturers Associations. That report listed Michigan 48 out of 48 states business climate.

"It all depends upon the types of industry you're talking about. Too many factors enter into it just to be able to

give a flat one to 48 ranking of the states."

Shapiro made his remarks at the Greater Detroit Chamber of Commerce conference in the Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island.

Of the Alexander Grant study, he said, "I think it's mainly a compendium of rather simplistic statistical rankings which have very little to do with the actual factors that contribute to, or hinder, economic growth."

SHAPIRO SAID, "Some of the criteria utilized in the study are outdated, many are irrelevant, and some are very ambiguous, so it's the old expression, 'garbage in, garbage out.'"

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'Adding up a bunch of miscellaneous statistical rankings which find Michigan last really doesn't tell us much about what the true issues affecting economic development in the Michigan area.'

— William Shapiro

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As an example, Shapiro cited the study's use of value added per production worker as an indicator of productivity. He said the figures were five years old and have "very little to do with what a manufacturer means by worker productivity when he's looking for a place to locate his plant."

Shapiro said manufacturers are concerned about productivity factors such as how hard-working people are; how conscientious, flexible and versatile they are, and how well trained they are.

AS ANOTHER example, he said electric power costs for business cannot be measured by state, but rather should be measured by utility-company service area.

A company using 400,000 kilowatt

hours per month in one part of Michigan may have a monthly bill of \$12,000, while in another part of Michigan, the bill would average \$23,000, he said.

Shapiro said such factors as property-tax abatement and educational and training facilities are pluses for Michigan's business climate, while Michigan ranks on the tough end of the spectrum

on environmental regulations.

He said local economic development is extremely important. "Too much emphasis is given the state business climate," Shapiro contended, "whereas often the most important factor is the local business climate, how well the local community can work with industry, available sites and utility services and amenities."

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Fermi 2 costs up; opening delayed

Detroit Edison Co. announced a \$100 million increase in the projected cost of a power plant under construction and a \$350 million increase in the projected cost of another. A delay in the anticipated opening of the second plant was also announced.

The Detroit-based utility said the projected cost of the two-unit Belle River coal-fired plant near Port Huron was reduced by \$100 million to \$2.05

billion, compared with the earlier projection of \$2.15 billion. The commercial operation date remains mid-1984. Unit 2 is still projected for mid-1985 start-up.

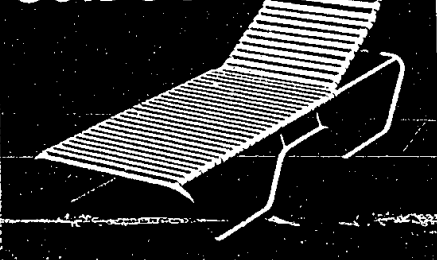
Detroit Edison attributed the reduction in Belle River's projected cost to improved productivity by its staff, contractors and construction workers, and a reduction in the cost of financing.

But the cost of the Fermi 2 nuclear

power plant near Monroe is expected to increase to \$2.7 billion from \$2.35 billion, and its anticipated operation date to be set back to June 1984 from November 1983.

Nearly one-third of the increase was attributed to financing charges and taxes as construction is stretched out as a result of completion of changes mandated by revised federal regulations.

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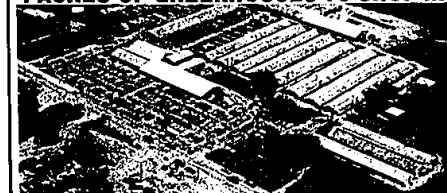
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